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Am 32

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HAVE YOU AN ANCHOR?

LOOKING out from our open window this morning toward the bay, we can see a home-bound ship riding gallantly up past the quarantine station and the leafy shores of Staten Island. She looks weary from a long voyage; and on her bow, as a field-marshal wears a star upon his breast, she bears her *anchor*. It has done good service, and deserves its place of honor on her front. It has been her salvation on many a night of tempest. Though it hangs idle now, beneath her bowsprit, yet more than once when the gale struck her in the open roadstead—or, when off a wild lee-shore, the hurricane made hideous music through her cordage, like one immense harp strung to the gales—that anchor was unloosed, and, running out with merry rattle of the chains, it dove straight downward to its resting-place. Upon the bottom of the deep its flukes took brave hold; and while the ship strained on the cable above, the patient flukes stoutly held on below. As soon might she attempt a voyage without a compass to guide her, or without canvas to impel her, as without an anchor to keep her from the devouring rocks or the yawning lee-shore. So, when she returns in triumph from a campaign with the elements, scarred with collisions of the angry deep, it is fitting that she bear on her bosom, as a trust and a trophy, the good anchor that held her safely.

Voyager to Eternity! have you the "anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast?" It is the Christian *hope*, Paul tells us. It is the hope in Christ which holds the soul of man as an anchor holds a ship. You can not have it without knowing it; and if you have it, you will be none the better if you do not use it in the hour of need.

2 HAVE YOU AN ANCHOR?

You will need it to keep you from drifting away into skepticism and unbelief. There is no such safeguard against practical infidelity as the possession of a living faith in Jesus. And the secret of so many a lapse into error—of so much veering about with “every wind of false doctrine,” is found in the lack of a well-grounded hope in the inner heart. As soon as the soul begins to swing away into painful doubts—doubts of God, of the truth of his Word, of the mercy of his dealings, of the triumph of his cause, or of the reality of heaven, then let go the anchor to the bottom. Nothing else will hold against that devil of doubt but a practical faith in the Lord Jesus.

But if you are not assailed with doubts, you are certain to be assailed with troubles. No hurricane can arise more suddenly upon a full-rigged ship, when moving gracefully before an evening breeze, than will the storms of adversity burst upon you; they will come, too, at the most unexpected moment. God lets loose his tempests on the sea without an hour's warning. As a vessel is often stripped of her mainsail, or loses her spars before the seamen can man the yards to take in canvas, so may it be with you. You may be struck “all aback”—may be obliged to heave overboard many of your cherished possessions; you may be stripped of many a topsail which ambition had hoisted, or many a spar of prosperity, but if Christ is in the soul you can not suffer wreck. Christ in the depths of the soul will anchor you. You do not see what holds a vessel when the storm is smiting her. The anchor is all invisible as it lies in the untroubled quiet “full many a fathom deep.” So, when we see a man beaten upon with adversity, or lying under a perfect Euroclydon of trials, and yet preserving a calm, cheerful spirit, we do not see always what is the secret of his serenity. We wonder why he is “not moved as other men are.” But God sees a hope, sure and steadfast, lying down deep beneath the surface. Trouble strips the man of

much of his external gear and cordage, but never touches the interior source and strength of his piety. When Martin Luther was struck with sudden tempests he used to sing the forty-sixth Psalm above the roar of the winds; his anchor never dragged. The devil let loose the utmost of his fury upon Paul; but the brave apostle had an "I know whom I have believed," that struck its flukes under the Rock of Ages. "O God! thou wilt keep in perfect peace the soul that is staid on thee."

There is a danger to the Christian greater than adversity or the persecution of enemies. It is from the stealthy *under-currents* of temptation. An unanchored ship may be lying on waters as smooth as glass, and yet, before the master is aware, his keel is on a rock. The invisible tide bore him away so softly and so silently that he did not observe the motion. Had the wind risen he would have taken the alarm; he did not suspect that an under-current was stealthily carrying him away. So are thousands of Christian professors carried on the rocks every day, not with shocks of adversity, but by invisible under-currents. One man insensibly drifts into neglect of prayer, and into laxity of Sabbath observance. Another feels the hand of sensual temptation on the keel, but takes no alarm until he strikes the rock with a hideous rent of his Christian character. Another gets in an under-current of worldliness; it swings him along slowly, but surely, until he has lost sight of the light-house on the headland; he is aroused by no sudden shock, but when we look for him where he used to be, and where he ought to be, he is not there. The world got hold of his keel, and his anchor had no hold on Christ. Is not this the secret of by far the larger part of all the backsliding in the Church?

It is not strength of intellect that saves a man, or the surroundings of society, or alliance with a Church, or orthodoxy of belief. All these have proved but ropes of sand

attached to anchors of straw. They never hold a man when the tide of temptation sets in. He must have Christian principle, or he is lost. No man is safe in business, or safe in public life, or safe in private morals, when his conscience is unloosed from Christ. When his godly principle gives way, he may float smoothly for awhile, but it is a mere question of time how soon he shall strike and go to the bottom. Remember God never *insures* a man, even in the Church, who has no anchor of true religion. And if you ever reach heaven, my friend, you will come in, like yonder vessel, with your anchor at the prow. You will give all the glory, then, not to your own skill or your own seamanship, but to the blessed "anchor, sure and steadfast, which entereth into that within the veil."

"There are ships," says the eloquent Melville, "that never will founder in life's battles or go down in life's tempests. There are ships which shall be in no peril when the last hurricane shall sweep earth and sea and sky; and which, when the fury is overpast, and the light that knows no night breaks gloriously forth, shall be found on tranquil and crystal waters, *resting beautifully on their shadows*. These are they who have trusted in Jesus; these are they who have been anchored upon Christ."

Quiet as a peaceful river,
 Quiet as the wind-hushed seas,
 In Jehovah trusting ever,
 We are kept in perfect peace.

Deep beneath the warring ocean,
 Deep beneath the howling flood,
 All unmoved by its commotion,
 Lie the promises of God.

We are anchored firmly to them;
 Though in tatters hang our shrouds,
 Calmly we look up, and through them
 View the thunder-riven clouds.

J. A. MARTLING.